

VZCZCXYZ1423
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #0314 0670922
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 070922Z MAR 08
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 8287
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7898
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 9155

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 000314

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - NIDA EMMONS
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S.-TAIWAN RELATIONS, TAIWAN'S UN
REFERENDA

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies continued to focus news coverage March 7 on the upcoming presidential poll, on the UN referenda, and on the island's consumer price hike. In terms of editorials and commentaries, an editorial in the pro-independence "Liberty Times" discussed the recent passage of a U.S. House of Representatives resolution calling on the U.S. government to keep its pledge to ensure Taiwan's democracy and security. The article said the move indicated the United States' support and concern for

Taiwan, and it concluded by saying that the Taiwan people should all the more cherish and safeguard the island's freedom and democracy. An editorial in the centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times," on the other hand, called on both the Blue and Green camps to go back to basics and leave it to the voters to decide whether they want to cast ballots on the UN referenda. End summary.

12. U.S.-Taiwan Relations

"The United States Attaches Great Importance to Taiwan's Democratic Development and National Security"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 720,000] editorialized (3/7):

"... Taiwan has progressed from authoritarian governance to democracy, and its political power has been transferred from an alien power to a nativist regime. The transfer was accomplished peacefully, while maintaining the island's economic prosperity. All these made Taiwan a true perfect model for the United States in its promotion of democratic values. Judging from this perspective, for the United States, the significance of supporting Taiwan's democracy should mean more than this 36,000-square-kilometer piece of land, but should also [mean something] for China or even Asia. ...

"Does this mean that one can have no more worries about Taiwan's democracy? Right at this moment, on the island [we] have the lingering power of the [previous] alien regime seeking to resume its power, and externally, [we] have a totalitarian China bent on annexing Taiwan. It is safe to say that there are still weak links with regard to Taiwan's democracy, which is on its way to consolidation. In this vein, the U.S. House of Representatives' passing a resolution two weeks prior to Taiwan's presidential election calling on the U.S. government to keep its pledge to ensure Taiwan's democracy and security has indicated both its support and its concern for the island. Even our American friends [are feeling this way], shouldn't we, as the host of Taiwan, cherish and work more firmly to safeguard our freedom and democracy?"

13. Taiwan's UN Referenda

"Let the Referendum System Return to What It Was Originally Designed to Be"

The centrist, KMT-leaning "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] editorialized (3/8):

"... Since both Ma Ying-jeou and Frank Hsieh seem to have quit hyping up the referenda issue, fewer people are talking about it now. In other words, the 'UN referenda' have actually been marginalized during the lead-up to the presidential election. When the time comes, it does not seem very hopeful that the referenda will pass their thresholds, let alone be passed by the voters. It is no wonder that not only the United States has kept quiet [about this issue] lately, but Beijing has also cut down its force in criticizing the UN referenda. The chances are getting ripe for the 'UN referenda to fail to pass.' ...

"Let's return to the basics! One [side] can choose to bundle the referenda with the presidential election, while the other [side] can decide not to pick up the referendum ballots. But in the end, it is up to all the voters in Taiwan to decide whether they want to pick up their referendum ballots or whether they want to vote in favor of the [KMT's] referendum to rejoin the UN or the [DPP's] referendum to join the UN. The voters might have made up their minds already. Why not leave it to them to decide? Perhaps it will take another round of such similar experience for the people here to regain their power over this mechanism of direct democracy - 'referenda' - or to recover the sacredness of the mechanism. That way the referenda will no longer be a tool to be bundled with the presidential election, or a bargaining chip to be manipulated by the politicians to intensify antagonism on the island. All the more, it will let the leaders be more cautious when they plan to launch another referendum next time, and the referendum will work better to reflect the people's voices."

YOUNG